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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE, EUR/SCE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#) [YI](#) [ZL](#)
SUBJECT: MGKV01: TURKEY SWIFTLY RECOGNIZES KOSOVO
INDEPENDENCE

REF: SECSTATE 16265

11. (U) At approximately 19:30 local time, February 18, the GOT formally recognized Kosovo's independence. FM Babacan's statement (see paragraph 4) emphasized the importance Turkey attaches to peace and stability in the Balkans. The statement also noted Turkey's historical and cultural ties to Kosovo and pledged Turkey's continued assistance to Kosovo's development. PM Erdogan reportedly called Kosovo PM Taci to congratulate him. According to the Turkish press, Turkey will carry out relations with Kosovo through its Pristina Coordination Office and its Embassy in Tirana, and Turkey will consider opening an Embassy in Pristina.

12. (SBU) Anticipating a rough patch in Ankara-Belgrade relations, FM Babacan underscored the importance Turkey attaches to improving its bilateral and regional relations with Serbia. In response to Turkey's announcement, Serbia has ordered its Ambassador to Turkey to return to Belgrade for "consultation until further notice." According to MFA contacts, the Serbian Ambassador will meet with FM Babacan February 19, where he is expected announce his departure. "Vatan" daily newspaper reported that stones were hurled at the Turkish Embassy in Belgrade, and that Turkey has submitted two separate notes to the Serbian Foreign Ministry demanding tighter security measures.

13. (U) Turkish media reaction is divided on Kosovo independence and on Turkey's swift recognition. Mainstream "Sabah" carried a cartoon on its front-page entitled "Double Standard," lampooning Europe's recognition of Kosovo but not of the "TRNC" (northern Cyprus). Other columnists cautioned against Turkey trying to link Kosovo to Cyprus, noting that such a precedent could create headaches for Turkey in northern Iraq. Cengiz Candar, in the business daily "Referans," celebrated Kosovo independence, expressing the joy he believes will be felt by the millions of Turkish citizens of Kosovo-origin. However, liberal "Radikal" and Islamist, pro-government "Yeni Safak" expressed apprehension at the deep divisions emerging between countries that recognize Kosovo's independence and those that oppose it. They warned that the new state will be entirely dependent on the United States, triggering a new Cold War with Russia, and igniting clashes in the Caucasus.

14. (U) Text of the statement of FM Babacan recognizing Kosovo's independence (as received).

BEGIN TEXT:

18 February 2008

STATEMENT OF H.E.MR. ALI BABACAN,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY,
REGARDING THE RECOGNITION OF KOSOVO BY TURKEY

The Assembly of Kosovo declared independence of Kosovo on 17 February 2008. In this context, an appeal was made to all countries of the world for the recognition of the Republic of Kosovo.

The Republic of Turkey has welcomed the content and elements of the Declaration of Independence, and with this understanding, has decided to recognize the independence of the Republic of Kosovo.

Securing peace and stability in the Balkans is one of Turkey's foreign policy priorities. Turkey attaches importance to advance the understanding of lasting peace in the Balkans which has suffered immensely in recent years and hopes that the independence of Kosovo will present an opportunity for the enhancement of stability and confidence among the countries in the region.

Serbia has a significant role and responsibility in the future of the Balkans. Turkey attaches importance to improving its relations and cooperation with Serbia, both at bilateral and regional levels.

Turkey believes that rule of law and the universal values of human rights, democracy and pluralism should be promoted in Kosovo. Turkey is also of the opinion that creating an atmosphere of mutual confidence and cooperation between Kosovo and her neighbours is essential.

Turkey believes that its long-established historical, cultural and human ties with Kosovo will be further strengthened. Turkey will continue its assistance and contributions for the development of Kosovo.

END TEXT.

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